

Wednesday, November 9, 2011

Notes on Dead Hand:

See Dead Hand, 149. Soviets C3 designers were in a race for speedy reaction (to warning; to decision; to command): he says, to eliminate human hesitancy to carry out command, tendency to ask questions of superiors (which was the right response in event of actual erroneous warnings and messages received: example 148). Yet operator “came to see the hair trigger as a dead end, that neither side could gain an edge by just shaving minutes off the decision process. But in 1984, he was doing his job, caught up in the quest for speed.”

(i.e. the need to preempt promptly, to avoid destruction of one’s own missiles, to achieve destruction of the other’s. To retaliate, but above all to limit damage.)

[But from about 1963-65 on, damage-limitation by either side **was as much of an illusory pursuit as the attempt to avoid “interference”—fratricide of pilots—by minute by minute planning. A hoax, a charade.**

That’s true for the last fifty years. Not just a gamble, like fast mobilization in WWI. (And that too was probably a delusion; it didn’t work; did it really have much chance to? Yes, if one side mobilized, perhaps the other side “had to,” or be totally vulnerable. But the German notion of mobilizing fast enough to conduct a two-front war preemptively, actually attacking France on that basis: was that ever realistic, even with admonitions to “keep the right flank strong”?)

One result of the race: automating the process, or allowing for low-level initiative in case of communications failure (probably true in all NWS). Thus losing protection against error at high levels, or in transmission, or unauthorized action. **Risking** nuclear war not desired by high command (as was risked in C-II).

The actual dangers in C-II, and the considerations that influenced actual choices by leaders in C-II, cannot be understood if you suppose that the leaders, JFK and K, (1) did control surely all the violent acts of their subordinates—i.e., it was a “two-person game”—or (2) that they believed they did, or (3) that they believed the other did. Or that neither of them realized that there was a third player, Castro. (JFK did not, K did, especially on Saturday, Oct. 27; JFK did not).

On Saturday, K **knew** that his own subordinates, and the third player, were out of his control. And JFK (and McN) were from the beginning concerned crucially about possible unauthorized action by the Soviets in Cuba (enough to rule out an air attack virtually from the beginning, or after the first few hours: thank God, since there was more reality to this than they knew).

But they couldn’t admit that, to the JCS or Republicans (or ExComm), so they had to go through a threat-process that included not only deployments (B-52s to airports!) but **recon flights over Cuba** and **Navy forcing Soviet subs to surface** (not knowing they

did not understand practice depth charge “signals” (note my study of “communications in crises”) (see U-2 over SU) (Missile firing from Vandenberg) (SAC air alert going past usual rendezvous points) which put a trigger to escalation in the hands of Castro, Soviet commanders of SAMS in Cuba, Soviet sub commanders. This despite their desire not to step on the ladder of escalation at all.

152: Since Dead Hand (and US equivalent) provides for full “retaliatory” attack if Moscow (or DC) (or perhaps, one other city as well) is hit: it gives every NWS, no matter how small (if it can reach Moscow, or DC) **a nuclear winter capability**.

This magnifies the Samson Option: which was actually prepared by France, Israel, South Africa. Better: Aum Shinrykyo, which wants catalytic total war. Israel, if destroyed or facing destruction?! Let humanity be destroyed. (Was SH incapable of that? Hitler? Castro?! (shoot one at DC; he thought socialism would survive; warn K that it was coming, he had to preempt!))